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I. Summary

1. The new Constitutional regime of Julio César MENDEZ has an opportunity to reduce the strength and attractiveness of the extremist movement, as the majority of Guatemalan people have rallied behind him and his Government. However, JCMM must run the risk of alienating some segments of the Guatemalan population as he develops his program, or become a "do-nothing" Chief of State.

2. His task will be more difficult since extremists have said violence will continue and have rejected his peace offers and his amnesty bill. Increasing difficulties may also be expected from student elements and perhaps even extremist elements in labor organizations.

3. The GOG appears to be trying to place the extremists in an unpopular light. Presumably, after the onus for continuing violence has been clearly placed with the extremists, the GOG will move ahead with counter-insurgency efforts, coupled with economic, social and political reforms. Its primary counter-insurgency tool, the Armed Forces, has deficiencies which handicap its ability to eliminate insurgency. The police also needs considerable improvement to become an effective instrument of counter-insurgency. Primary long-range reliance for combatting subversives will probably have to be on an effective social welfare program, which has not yet been developed by the GOG, but it is doubtful such can succeed unless also linked with effective counter-insurgency police and military work. The next eighteen months will be crucial in determining the success of the new Government in providing the internal security and stability which is a prerequisite for the success of its vaunted socio-economic "reform" program.

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II. Introduction

1. During July, the first month of President Julio César MENDEZ Montenegro's (JCMM) new Government, an opportunity presented itself to bring about a change in Guatemala's internal security situation.

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The JCMM Government did its best to take advantage of the new atmosphere created by a constitutional regime, but whether it will have been successful, only time will tell

2. Of course, much of this delay is attributable to the many other and serious distractions faced by JCMM in the pre-inaugural period. Rather than having time to concentrate on program development, he was forced to expend every energy on assuring himself that the inauguration would indeed take place.

The lack of discussion of any major issues, and the failure of any party to develop in the course of the campaign a serious program certainly contributed to the first month of relative inaction by the new Government.

3. However, the inauguration took place on schedule and JCMM found himself at the head of the Government which had, and still has, probably more popular support than any Guatemalan Government has had in some time. Most of the Right seems to have resigned itself to the fact of his Government, and has been assuaged by JCMM's moderate pace and careful selection in his Administration personnel. The more moderate Left is content that a "revolutionary" Government has come to power and eagerly awaits its program. Even Francisco VILLAGRAN Kramer, former leader of the far-leftist URD, publicly urged support of the Mendez Government and wished it all success. The Armed Forces too, have been effectively wooed by JCMM.

4. So the JCMM Government cannot claim lack of popular support. ~~Unfortunately,~~ Only one significant group, the extreme left, has remained outside the realm of JCMM's influence, and it is to this group that JCMM has been forced to devote most of his attention in the first month in office.

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III. JCMM's Peace Moves

5. JCMM did not waste time to make clear his intention to offer to all disaffected elements a choice between the "open hand of peace" or the "closed fist" of repression if the former were refused. His inaugural address on July 1 was highlighted by a plea for unity and peace, urging extremists to lay down their arms and return to Guatemalan society. The first official act of the new Government was to lift the state of siege which had been imposed by the Peralta Government in May and extended in June. Press censorship was ended and civil rights were fully restored.

6. The police forces came under intense press and Governmental scrutiny. With considerable fanfare, the new Minister of the Interior, Hector MANSILLA Pinto, declared that police torturing of prisoners would cease and that the room where tortures had been committed would be converted into a library. The press was permitted access to the torture chamber and the papers played up photos and stories about the gory goings-on of the past. The Judicial police was also to be reorganized and would henceforth serve as the investigative arm of the courts, and no more. The National police was to be similarly reorganized and a number of changes in personnel took and are still taking place. (Subsequently, in August, it was announced that the Judicial police would be completely disbanded and replaced by a National Detective Force. See below.)

7. The Army was kept more or less in rein. Although the Minister of Defense, Col. Rafael ARRIAGA, made a pointed remark that the Army was ready, willing and able to pursue the guerrillas and terrorists, awaiting only the order of the President JCMM avoided the issue by saying the time was not ripe for any declaration of such intent on the part of the Government. He also spent considerable time visiting the different military bases and wooing their officers and men.

8. But the most important move by the JCMM Government was the approval by the National Congress of an Amnesty Bill (Embassy A-52). According to its provisions, extremists were given eight days in which to lay down their arms and quit the rebel forces. Each person guilty of political crimes committed after November 1, 1960 and before July 26, 1966, would receive a pardon if he did so; each was to turn in his arms to local authorities and receive a receipt in return with no charges pressed against him. Release of kidnap victims would free kidnappers from prosecution for the crime. Talk of this bill had begun

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immediately after the inauguration, but it took most of the month for action finally to occur. The bill received wide publicity, and news of the amnesty was spread by handbills dispersed from airplanes over the guerrilla territories in Izabal and Zacapa. (By the time the eight days had expired on August 3, however, no arms had been turned in and no extremists had availed themselves of the amnesty.)

IV. FAR and MR-13 Reaction

9. Although the reaction of the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR) could already be sensed in the pre-inaugural period, Mendez' appeals for peace and the amnesty bill provoked a sharp and explicit response from FAR leader Luis TURCIOS. In a press interview (GUATEMALA 550) he made known his total rejection of any peace moves or amnesty, branding them as "ultimatums" wholly unacceptable to the revolutionary forces. Bitterly attacking the Army, Turcios alleged that it remained in control of the Government despite the facade of the JCMM Administration; and that, with U.S. advice, it continued with acts of cruelty and aggression against the campesino. He reiterated that his objective was to take power and form "a government of workers, campesinos and the people themselves." He would not lay down his arms, he said, and would not release his two captives, Augusto DE LEON and Baltazar MORALES, until he was ready to do so. While the Army bore the brunt of his attack, he made very clear his view that the Partido Revolucionario (PR) had made common cause with the Army, and that it too was now a prime enemy of the FAR.

10. Actually, these views came close to echoing the view expressed by the FAR in a press release issued sometime before the Amnesty Bill was passed, but after the inauguration. This statement had been billed as the FAR's statement of policy vis-a-vis the new Government, and was equally uncompromising (GUATEMALA 317). It said revolution was inevitable as long as "Yankee imperialism" survived in Guatemala. It called the new Government a coalition of the PR with "the reactionary forces . . . a continuation of the military dictatorship." Surprisingly, it mentioned the MR-13 favorably and appeared to consider it a part of the revolutionary struggle.

11. The Movimiento Revolucionario del 13 de Noviembre (MR-13) was equally adamant. MR-13 leader Marco Antonio YON Sosa held a jungle press conference at which he voiced similar opinions (GUATEMALA 339). While this also occurred before the Amnesty

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Bill had passed, the possibility of its passage was well enough known that Yon Sosa took it into consideration and specifically mentioned that he was "not in the least interested in an amnesty, pardon, promises, settlements, or any other such thing." He too reiterated that the MR-13 is interested in violent revolution, that his struggle is "to the death with capitalism." However, in view of the known difficulties the MR-13 has had recently (Embassy's A-22), Yon Sosa also stated that the MR-13 had expelled Trotskyist elements which had infiltrated it, and had broken relations with the Fourth International. He aligned himself with the Communist Chinese political line and said "We cannot accept Soviet peaceful co-existence." Since the Havana Tri-continental Conference had not treated him particularly well, he not surprisingly blasted it as "especially influenced by the USSR." Finally, he also commented on the possibility of a rapprochement with the FAR, but did not elaborate other than to say that any reconciliation would have to be under a program of "the socialist revolution."

12. While the FAR rejection was somewhat anticipated, the MR-13 statement caused more surprise and disappointment. The FAR and the PGT, it must be remembered, are in a fairly good position; the FAR probably can count on about 300 hard-core activists. Part-time guerrillas, sympathizers and support personnel can reach 3,000, including PGT members. Undoubtedly, the PR and JCMM sincerely hope to pacify these rebellious groups and the "open hand of friendship" was honestly extended. There was particular hope that Yon Sosa would avail himself of peace moves since his troubles with the Fourth International, his rejection by Castro, his dwindling resources and followers have given hope that he may be disillusioned and willing to give up his arms. (One estimate is that he has barely twenty people with him now, and that supplies are so short that the group is turning to banditry to stay alive.) While the possibility for his surrender still exists (Yon Sosa may have been taking a hard line to obtain better conditions from the Mendez Government), it is also possible, particularly in view of the MR-13 and FAR statements regarding each other, that a reconciliation between the two groups actually is in the making. Why Yon Sosa should suddenly take a hard line is unknown.]

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V. Students

13. Surely University students, and possibly secondary school students, will play an increasing role in Guatemalan extremist politics. Under the military regime, student involvement in national affairs diminished appreciably. This was readily understandable since the Peralta Government made clear it would brook no nonsense from students. When the latter intended any sort of action, the former quickly made it clear student leaders would be held responsible, and used troops readily to make sure the students did not get out of hand. Student ambition for disturbance evaporated quickly in the face of such opposition, and for three years student intrusion in national politics was so minimal that it virtually was non-existent.

14. Under a constitutional regime, this is likely to change. With freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and a President whose "first love" has always been the University, it is likely that a much more tolerant attitude will exist towards the students, some of whom are sure to see it as license.

15. This has already been noted. The University Student Association (AEU) vigorously and successfully pursued the matter of the 28 political prisoners of the Peralta regime who disappeared. Bachiller Oswaldo GUERRA y Guerra, the AEU legal adviser ("asesor juridico") who carried out the investigation, was subsequently offered a position in the Guatemalan Foreign Service (Chile) which he accepted. But this is probably only a stop-gap solution, since Guerra's AEU position will surely be filled by another "activist" of similar bent. In any event, the AEU investigation turned up a number of unmarked graves and testimony on the secret execution without trial of the political prisoners. While the investigation was unpopular in many circles in Guatemala, and while the AEU allegedly received money from the Communists for the investigation, it must also be recalled that the AEU for the first time in several years projected itself efficiently and ably onto the national scene and did touch on an unsavory mystery. Since the AEU leadership continues to be communist-dominated, it follows a rigidly doctrinaire line which in effect precludes it from gaining larger influence and support among either students or the public. For example, the AEU remained silent when a relative of a FAR victim urged them to investigate several FAR executions.

16. The main hopeful sign appearing on the student scene is the increasing strength of the Social Christian Student Federation (FESC). While not necessarily pro-American and frequently radical

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in their views, at least the FESC students are anti-communist and anti-violence. As such, they represent the greatest threat to continuing communist influence at the University, and in fact, recently won control of the key Law School student organization.

17. In summary, then, it appears as if Guatemala is in for increasing political activity by students. Since some of its leaders (but not all) are communist or communist-influenced, and many even take active part in or give support to guerrilla activity, such increased activity will not always result in greater peace for Guatemala. The AEU leadership has proved to be a well-oiled and efficient machine, and the new freedoms enjoyed by students under the Méndez Government may encourage that leadership to excesses.

VI. The Right

18. During July, the extreme Right gradually lost its effervescence. At the time of the Presidential inauguration, it was at least one element of the extreme Right, through its clandestine organization La Mano Blanca, which spoke most strongly of the need to prevent JCOMM from assuming power. It actually carried out a number of terrorist acts, its group (which probably never numbered more than a handful of people) generally manned by elements associated with the conservative Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN). However, when it became apparent that few would go along with these efforts, and that a coup was impossible, the MLN became more tranquil and eventually issued a statement that it would not condone terrorist activity, but rather would assume the role of a "loyal opposition." Its behavior in the National Congress was gradually beginning to reflect this policy in July, where the small group of five MLN deputies acted with increasing responsibility.

19. It is likely that for the short run at least, the MLN will not have the capability nor hopefully the desire to attempt a new coup, although La Mano Blanca may well continue to cause trouble. If Méndez continues his relatively cautious and conservative policies, the MLN and other rightists will probably go along with him, although the MLN is maintaining contact with some elements in the Army and presumably would always be ready to act if a good opportunity presented itself. The main danger for a Rightist coup would come if the Méndez Government

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VIII. GOG Capacity for Countering Extremist Activity

22. The Méndez Government has proceeded cautiously (some say far too cautiously) in formulating its counter-subversive policies. Partly this has been due to the administrative confusion that surrounded (and still surrounds to some degree) Méndez' efforts to organize his government, and partly to lack of dynamic effective leaders who are also politically acceptable. The slowness to mount an energetic program and maintain momentum has given rise to some restiveness and dissatisfaction among younger officers in the Armed Forces who complain about the "do nothing" attitudes of the high command (GUATEMALA 1052 and 1098). To a large degree this is a "hot-head" reaction born of frustration, and is more gripping than anything else at the present time. But it does illustrate the psychological problem that could potentially bloom into divisiveness if the impression of energetic leadership is not projected by the GOG.

23. It had been an article of faith among the directing powers of the Partido Revolucionario (PR) that the root causes of insurgency and such popular support as that insurgency has achieved were primarily attributable to popular resentment against the de facto military government and all its ills. The PR thesis was that once a popularly-elected government came to power, the people would identify with it, and would no longer be drawn (or forced) to support insurgency as the only feasible means to secure improvement in their lot. Hence, the PR reasoned, what is necessary is first of all to create the proper psychological atmosphere so that all popular support will be withdrawn from the insurgents, and then deal drastically with the unreconstructed "hard-core." This was the objective of the amnesty bill--to make clear to the Guatemalan people that the GOG has done all in its power to reintegrate dissident elements into normal society. Administration leaders (including the President) insist that this objective was largely accomplished.

24. The flat rejection of the amnesty on the part of the FAR and MR-13 leadership did serve the GOG's psychological purposes since it killed any myth of "nationalistic revolution", and stamped the FAR and MR-13 as committed to violence and as foreign-supported. Some PR elements may have been disappointed that no real defections were evident. However, the PR, the GOG and the Armed Forces have been faced inescapably with a challenge they cannot ignore. Every indication the Embassy has received indicates that the President is ready to accept that challenge.

In addition, the Armed Forces have moved into some immediate short-range operations to "sweep" the guerrilla areas. So far these have not resulted in any major contact with guerrilla forces.

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25. There remains, however, the very pertinent question of whether GOG security forces (both military and police) presently have the capacity to make an effective counter-insurgency effort even if the Administration should decide on this course. One frequent heard argument runs as follows: In three years of military government, with full resources available to it, and with suspension of civil rights under "States of Siege," the insurgent forces not only were not eliminated but in fact flourished. A constitutional regime, whose resources must be applied to socio-economic programs and which necessarily must permit greater freedoms, will be even less effective in terms of sheer military force. Hence, the argument runs, the insurgency problem will become worse. This argument of course, ignores the PR thesis that the very existence of constitutional government will reduce popular support for the extreme which may be true to some extent, but is hardly susceptible of analysis at this point. It also fails to take into account the continuing connections of the FAR with foreign supporters who have little interest in constitutionalism.

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IX. Other Dissident Groups

26. Perhaps the most significant dissidents to have come out in favor of the Mendez Government, thereby lessening the support of extremist elements, are the old Arevalist organizations. Shortly after the inauguration, they announced that they would form a "common front" in support of Mendez.

[REDACTED] Certainly if all these "parties" (PRO, PUR, PNR-44 and a few others) were unalterably opposed to this Government, the Communists would have available to them considerably more passive support. Not having it robs them of much also; for example, former President Arevalo still has a certain "image" among the campesinos and intellectuals of Guatemala and his implied support of extremists through these old groupings would then help a lot. His opposition will hurt correspondingly.

27. As mentioned above, another "party" which has expressed support of the Mendez Government is the Unidad Revolucionaria Democrática (URD), the party formed by enigmatic leftist Francisco VILLAGRAN Kramer. While the party was publicly formed along democratic leftist and reformist lines, it was known to have absorbed at least some persons who were equally in favor of violent revolution. However, now that Villagran has come out clearly in support of Mendez, the violent elements presumably will have to be more cautious in their espousal of other action. Villagran also has a fairly large personal following in Guatemala who will do as he says. These too should now support the Mendez Government.

X. Summary of Extremist Activities During July

28. Extremist activities during July consisted mostly of propaganda moves, such as the aforementioned press conferences, press releases and continuing radio broadcasts from Cuba. The police did begin to go through the reorganization process and set up a central complaint bureau designed to handle more rapidly any reports of terrorism or other crime (thus far, the complaint bureau has not functioned very well).

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29. On July 5, a bomb exploded in the garden of Julio LOWENTHAL, a prominent local businessman. It is assumed to have been placed there by Rightists.

30. On July 3, Jose Maria MOREIRA, former chief of the Judicial Police, fled the country, either out of fear of prosecution by the new Government, or for fear of reprisal from the extreme Left.

31. The press on July 14 announced the discovery of a certain quantity of arms on a farm in Pajapita, San Marcos. These included two bazookas, seven rockets, 33 grenades, a sub-machinegun, plus some propaganda materiel. Presumably these were abandoned by a smuggler when he thought he might be captured.

32. The AEU completed its investigation (sic) of the 28 political prisoners who disappeared and announced, to no one's surprise, that they had been secretly executed.

33. Pleas were made to the extremists to free their two prisoners, Baltazar MORALES and Augusto DE LEON. Both were interviewed by a newspaperman who accompanied a doctor, both arranged by the FAR to check on the captives' health and quiet criticism. De Leon is ailing. The FAR rejected these pleas and said they would release the men when ready to do so, and not before.

34. On July 23, Efrain NAJERA Dubon, the chief of the Comisionados Militares in Rabinal, was assassinated by FAR terrorists.

XI. Conclusions

35. The Government has an opportunity to diminish the extremist threat in Guatemala if it acts rapidly with psychological, economic, sociological, political, police and military weapons. Failure to act will inevitably cause a deterioration of the situation as discontented elements will turn more and more to violence to seek their objectives.

36. The present GOG will have a hard time in meeting this essential obligation to start solving Guatemala's problems. It needs charismatic leaders, it needs peace and cooperation from elements other than extremists, it needs honest government,

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